April 4, 2013

Grover Fugate, Executive Director
Coastal Resources Management Council
Oliver Steadman Government Center
4808 Tower Hill Road
Wakefield, RI 02879

Re: Petition 2013-03-001 to repair Newport Cliff Walk as proposed

The Rhode Island Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation would like to request a public hearing or public workshop on the Department of Transportation proposed project to repair the Newport Cliff Walk. This project involves a very public and heavily used recreational area making this a statewide issue which should be vetted properly.

The Surfrider Foundation is an international network of 250,000 volunteers who are working to protect our oceans, waves, and beaches. Specifically in Rhode Island, our chapter has focused on water quality, public access, and maintaining the integrity of our unique coastal features - both onshore and off.

The surf break at Ruggles Avenue challenges local and out-of-state surfers year-round. It is internationally known, and during well-forecasted conditions, is a frequent travel destination for surfers from across North America. In addition, the Newport Cliff Walk draws hundreds of thousands of tourists and locals alike and is recognized as a National Recreation Trail in a National Historic District. Both are key Newport landmarks and neither should suffer at the expense of the other.

The currently proposed plans for restoring the Cliff Walk seems not only over-excessive but the proposed addition of 730 cubic yards of new armor stone below mean high water would have a permanent impact on the benthic environment and the offshore wave break. This seems especially detrimental in Type 1 Conservation waters.

The Rhode Island Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation would like to see these recreation, conservation and historic areas preserved in a manner that continues to allows for public access with minimal impact on our treasured coastal resources. We look forward to hearing back regarding a meeting time and place should CRMC decide to hold a public hearing. As always, please feel free to contact us if we can be of assistance.

Best regards,

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